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ABSTRACT

The Netherlands' New Basic School was implemented in the mid-1980s to increase individualized instruction and curriculum differentiation in the earliest grades and to improve schools' capacity to serve students with varying learning needs and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Under the plan, preschools and primary schools were brought together, combining professionals with quite different orientations and training. This paper reports on a study examining educators' implementation of this comprehensive change in 25 schools. The report shows how principals developed coherent change scenarios (for transformation, partial change, or description of current practices) that blended the local implementation agenda with temporary structural arrangements facilitating change. The principals' design of local scenarios reflects the contexts of national policy, the local community, and the school's internal environment. As social systems, schools are not well equipped to handle continual change and innovation. Implementation of complex innovation necessitates new coupling patterns or puts existing weak couplings under pressure. Scenarios for change may be viewed as a response pattern, a school's adaptation to an external policy maker's intervention. Change scenarios should also be conceived as an outcome of self-reflection and organizational self-production. Policy linkage then becomes an active process in which schools (re)produce and transform themselves as organizations. (Eight references) (MLH)

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DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSES TO A CENTRAL RENEWAL POLICY:

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

HANS KNIP & REIN VAN DER VEGT

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Differentiated Responses to a Central Renewal Policy: School Management of Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The Netherland's New Basic School was implemented in the mid 1980s to increase individualized instruction and curriculum differentiation for children in the earliest grades. It was also to increase schools' capacity to serve students with a wider range of learning needs and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. To do so, preschools and primary schools were brought together, combining professionals with quite different orientations and formal training.

This paper reports from a study which sought to map and conceptualize the implementation of this comprehensive change by principals and teachers. In particular it describes how principals developed coherent "scenarios for change" which blended the local implementation agenda with temporary structural arrangements that facilitated change. The closer these scenarios were to the locus of ongoing educational practice, the more they facilitated deep implementation including the whole array of New Basic Schools goals. The principal's design of the local scenarios reflects three factors. Firstly the national policy context, which while uniform nationally, was interpreted differently in various settings. Secondly the local community contexts which differed in their support for the reform agenda. Thirdly the internal environment of the school which included both the principal's centrality as a leader and the school's innovation capacity.

Though the study is situated in a Dutch educational setting, the description and analysis of school-level implementation of comprehensive change may have theoretical relevance for other settings as well. Under the influence of social and educational developments, many schools are brought into a position of almost permanent change and innovation. As social systems they are not very well equipped in this respect. Implementation of complex innovation necessitates new coupling patterns or puts existing weak couplings under pressure. The current focus is on leadership, organizational climate and participation. A temporary structural arrangement as a potential tool of leadership is underexposed. This paper requests specific attention be given to this, both with regard to its possible contribution to innovation and to its contextual limitation.

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DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSES TO A CENTRAL RENEWAL POLICY: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

The background to this paper is to be found in the increasingly active role taken by the Dutch government in educational policy since the 1970's. In both primary and secondary education, mandated reforms of a radical nature have emanated from the central policy authority. The effects have been to penetrate the local school system both in its organizational arrangements and in its classroom practices. The new policies, being centrally determined, are common for all schools; however, while the expected outcome is determined, some latitude is allowed to each school in deciding how to achieve the outcome.

Our study is not specifically concerned with the educational content of the innovation concept. Our assumption is that any demand for complex educational reform represents a significant intervention into the existing life and practices of the school. Such a central reform imports current public policy standards for renewal work into the organization; it poses the school with issues of redefining and restructuring its external and internal relationships.

But viewing the school as an implementing organization, we would not expect a precise correspondence between the centrally defined policy concept and the response of the local school. The central policy can be seen as a stimulus which arouses in the school a process of self-reflection, the end-result of which is a response pattern to the central policy. The implication of this view is that one cannot determine in advance what the school's response should be: this must await the process whereby the school transforms the design concept initially put forward by the central policymaker into

its own project (Latour, 1986).

We would not, however, expect that each school would come up with a totally unique response. On the contrary, response patterns are likely and can in fact be identified. What is needed now from a conceptual standpoint is to link conditions in the local organization at the time of the reform with particular response patterns. Tracing these linkages is the concern of this paper.

We do this by describing three identifiable response patterns and the variables at the local level which gave rise to them. In particular, we describe how principals are engaged in developing these patterns or 'scenarios for change'. Their scenarios contain two basic ingredients. They are a blend between -firstly- the innovation agenda, ..that is, the set of locally stated innovation goals, selected in response to the central policy aims; and -secondly- the temporary work structure for implementation, that is, the arrangements for implementation as developed by the school to carry out its concrete renewal tasks. These temporary work arrangements at the local level have various features. Here we focus on how the arrangements were situated in the school's life: close to or distant and apart from the central life of the school. In fact, the proximity of these arrangements to the school's core activities is seen as an important indication for the degree to which the school actually allowed the central policy to penetrate its system.

The research project

In our study, 25 schools were involved. The data base was developed in two parts. The first was a multi-case study. Over a period of one year, the implementation efforts in four schools were documented, using observation and interview procedures. The second part involved a survey in 21 schools. In each of them, extensive interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers and the external educational consultants.

In this paper we depend largely on a case study of three schools. Although this research is exploratory, the idea that responses to policy innovations at the local level are substantially determined by pre-existing conditions pertaining in the

school has considerable implications for the assumptions of policymakers, educational consultants and researchers alike.

THE REFORM: THE NEW BASIC SCHOOL

Traditionally, Dutch education has been characterized by separate kindergarten and elementary school systems. In the 'seventies a new educational policy evolved. This state-initiated policy proposed the creation of a new type of school for children between the ages of four and twelve. Principals and teachers were to implement this new basic school at the school level. Approximately 8000 schools and 1.5 million students were involved. About 60000teachers were affected by the new policy in their immediate work environment.

The range of policy intentions for the development of the New Basic School was broad and of a radical nature. These intentions did not only involve the structural integration of the hitherto separated school systems, but also implied educational and didactic change towards an innovative school concept. The new school was to be developed to promote individualization and curricular differentiation in the major teaching domains, and the improvement of the school's capacity in meeting a wider range of students' needs. Furthermore, a new organizational and school leadership structure had to be developed which would reflect the integration of the two subsystems. The overall objectives for the new school were, given the radical nature of the reform, widely accepted in political and professional fields. It is the school's task to give these objectives a programmatic and workable shape. It is thus left up to the people at the local level to produce a school which would embody the new -locally specified and adapted- mission of the basic school.

Our research focussed on the experiences of those schools that were specially funded to be pioneers in this setting. In the period leading up to the general and mandated introduction of the new basic school, a limited number of schools were encouraged to experiment with the innovation concept. This took place within the framework of a national program, a scheme including a variety of resources and obligations for the participating schools. Schools could acquire additional teaching staff and extensive external assistance with regard to curriculum and organization development. The funding scheme was competitive; proposals by the applying schools could be turned down or modifications requested by the central educational

authority.

The schools that successfully applied for an innovation experiment (project) could be considered as 'contractors for change'. They became implementing organizations, contracted partners for reform work in a national policy context (Beyer et al., 1983). We expected this contract status to intervene forcefully in the daily life of the schools. The intervening quality would be achieved by two aspects of contract status, namely 'policy linkage' and 'project format'.

POLICY LINKAGE AND PROJECT FORMAT: COUPLING AND DECOUPLING

Policy linkage as part of contract status means that the implementing schools became more connected to the dynamics of their (bureaucratic) policy environment. Project format means that these schools had to pursue implementation through a focussed but temporary work structure designed to accomplish specific renewal tasks. Thus, contract status has a 'change inducing' nature: it has the potential to intervene in the school's life. Through (increased) policy linkage and (induced) project format the organization is more or less intensively 'forced' to revise its current internal and external relationships, i.e. the school is induced to engage in establishing a revised set of coupling patterns (Van der Vegt and Knip, 1990)

Policy linkage, as an aspect of contract status, has, as we have said, an inducing nature: it imports current policy and administrative standards for renewal work into the organization and it carries new educational ideas into the school. In our context, policy linkage refers to the degree of coupling between the reform objectives as stated by the central authority and the local intentions for innovation as put forward by the contracted schools.

Granting contract status required the school to present a written project plan, including an agenda for change with their specified and substantive items for innovation in relation to the overall reform objectives. Project plan and agenda had to be presented for approval to the (central) department of education and

they could be subject to negotiation between the policy maker and the school.

In our research, we analyzed the plans and agendas of the schools, particularly with reference to each school's intention to change its actual pedagogical and educational core practices -its basic approaches and methods. This would indicate - in varying degrees - whether as a matter of fact the school tended to view its change tasks from an innovative standpoint more or less closely linked to the central reform concept for the new school.

Project format involves (a) the requirement for an agenda-for-change; (b) an agreed time period for accomplishing the contract; and (c) an explicit statement by the school to crucial sectors of its environment regarding the proposed changes (a quest for legitimization). Coupling here refers to the degree to which the design of the local temporary ('expedient') project structure is focussed on and geared to the implementation of the agenda-for-change.

A temporary structure for implementation - that is, a work arrangement of task forces, work procedures, coordinating roles and the like - has various features. In this paper, we are interested in the way the arrangement was situated in the school: close to or distant and apart from the central life of the school and its educational core activities.

We will illustrate. A temporary project structure serves to deal and cope with innovation tasks - which by their nature are new and unfamiliar - to which the standing organization is not adequately geared. Its very status of a temporary structure within the school organization provides people with opportunities for 'unfamiliar' and non-traditional ways of working and relating. However, on the other hand there is the risk of separating too widely innovation work (as carried out in the temporary project structure) from daily core activities in the classroom. Thus, in our study we focussed on the structural connection between the project structure and the delivery operations: its proximity to the actual day-to-day educational activities.

In our research, we observed and interviewed teachers as to the

extent they introduced concrete matters and problems from their daily classroom practices into the components of the temporary structure, such as innovation meetings and special training sessions, and the reverse. To what extent were specific decisions made in these meetings with regard to practising innovative ideas in the classroom, and were classroom experiences brought back for evaluation? Furthermore, we checked the presence of provisions for connecting innovation work with daily practice, for example, a consultation meeting or a coordination procedure. These data led us to determine the degree of proximity of the project structure to daily educational practices. Situating this temporary structure close to these daily practices would likely result in a relatively high impact of the implementation activities on the actual teaching behavior.

We have referred so far to (1) the schools' agendas-for-change, as related to the central reform objectives, and to (2) the schools' temporary structures-for-implementation, as related to (or situated in) the delivery practices. In summary, we pose three research questions:

1. What are the schools' stakes for innovation - how high, how low?, i.e. how closely connected are their agendas to the external, ambitious reform aims for the new school?
2. How did the schools situate their temporary structures in their organizational contexts, i.e. how closely are their arrangements connected to the delivery operations?
3. What conditions, within and outside the school, determine the choices with respect to these connections or couplings?

THREE SCENARIOS FOR CHANGE

We view the very nature of the change agenda as well as the design of the temporary structure as a response by the school system to an external and demanding central policy in general, and to contract status in particular. Together they constitute the school's response pattern; or to put it differently, they are the basic ingredients

of the school's scenario-for-change. A scenario reflects the response of the social system to the policy intervention and as such indicates the degree to which the school actually allows the central policy to enter its system. Thus, the nature of the local agenda and design of the project structure may provide empirical evidence for a school's response pattern, its scenario.

Three scenarios-for-change emerged from the analysis of the agendas of the (21) schools and their project structures. We present a description of each of the scenarios, with illustrations from the case study.

A. Scenario-for-transformation

This is a high stake scenario. The scenario reflects the school's intention for a far-reaching change of both its educational and organizational practices as related to the external policy aims. In other words, people in the school expect that in due time their delivery operations will be strongly affected: their innovation agenda is closely linked to external policy statements, and the temporary work structure is closely connected to their daily classroom practices.

School A from the case study exemplifies this. The principal formulated the items for change in close correspondence to the fundamental components of the innovation concept of the new basic school. The ambition was to develop the school's capacity to cater professionally for a wide range of learning needs, which included the integration of special care activities in the school's repertoire. Consequently, the innovation agenda contained items of differentiation practices, remedial teaching and individualizing approaches.

The design of the work structure to conduct the implementation of the agenda, was rather simple but it was intensively used. Moreover, this structure was closely coupled to the core activities in the classroom. Nevertheless, the principal achieved a clear-cut (structural) division between the innovation tasks and the routine activities. The components of the temporary structure -taskgroups etc. - constituted the workshops for the teachers to develop and

improve their teaching approaches. But again, these workshops were closely linked to the every day reality of classroom teaching. Among other things, this was achieved by asking the teachers to report to the temporary taskforce each week on the progress of implementation in their class during the previous week. This represented a short time period between curricular decisionmaking and the actual start of implementing that decision in terms of 'doing things differently from then on'.

B. Scenario-for-partial change

This second scenario is for partial change, that is, the innovation agenda refers to concrete, operational problems of daily school practices. The items for change are of a limited nature: specific, immediate and operational, and not framed or embedded in an encompassing view on the school's educational process. The items relate to the immediacy of current, practical problems; they are loosely connected, and there is also but a loose link with central policy aims. Moreover, there is an ad hoc and opportunistic linkage between the temporary work structure for implementation and the classroom operations. The design of the work structure is not firmly tied together; it is rather fragmented and geared only to solving limited problems of a limited number of teachers.

School B exemplifies this scenario. Its agenda is not derived from an overall, integrating school concept but simply lists a number of discrete, unconnected improvements in various teaching subjects. Its work structure for implementation is not very complex; it has a low profile and is not very prominent or visible in the life of the school. Though the agenda lists actual problems, the temporary structure is not situated close to the delivery system. It seems as if these problems are put in quarantine and dealt with in separation. This is illustrated by the fact that the work for innovation is conducted once a month only, and typically staged as a free-floating 'study-and-discussion session'. These sessions are organized like an open stage: teachers, parents and other interested parties are invited to engage in discussions on a specific item of current concern. An exchange of ideas and notions seldom leads to

even a decision to change the educational practices in the school. A study session may provide the teachers with a broad perspective as to how to approach specific learning problems but no measures are taken or arrangements made to link this to central policy aims, let alone to concrete implementation work at the school level.

C. Scenario-for-description

This is a low stake scenario: schools with this scenario do not commit themselves seriously 'to do things differently'. By means of their agenda, these schools 'announce' a description of their actual educational practices. No real change, neither far-reaching nor partial, is to be expected as a result of the innovation project. In fact, the agenda is merely a formal representation of the policy: a written document shaped and modelled after the policy maker's statement on the essential components of the new basic school.

Consequently, teachers are involved in describing their teaching approaches; the principal typically assembles these descriptions into an overall 'policy document', pointing out domains for (possible) future change and development. The detailed statement on the innovation concept, as spelled out by the central policymaker, is the reference point for these documenting and assembling activities at the school level. Thus, the work structure is simple and loose: teachers are 'writing units', delivering their products to the principal as 'editor'. (N.B. In scenario B, the principal acts as a 'stage producer'; in scenario C, the principal is the 'chief editor'.) There is no real effort to implement concrete change; the focus is on describing, which, of course may have an awareness-raising effect on the part of the teaching staff.

School C illustrates this. Its innovation agenda lists many teaching domains as 'targets for review'. In contrast to schools A and B, this school does not present a more or less systematic diagnosis of problems in its delivery system. There is no explicit attempt to diagnose its current practices in the light of the (external) innovation concept. The temporary work structure is a simple one: 'delivering the written goods to the assembly point', i.e. from teacher to principal. The structure has no connection with

changing the daily operations in the classroom. The documenting workers and assembler convene in bi-monthly meetings to exchange problems in documenting and in composing the final report. Actual efforts to implement change are not at stake.

So far we have presented a brief sketch of three innovation scenarios as they emerged from our study. We could say that they are three points on a scale that represents the degree of penetration of the innovation policy into the school.

We inspected our survey data in order to find out how many schools had chosen each of the scenarios. When answering this question it is necessary to differentiate between the stakes of the agenda for change and the designed proximity of the project structure. As far as the innovation agenda is concerned only 25% of the schools signed for the scenario of transformation. Half of the schools chose a scenario for partial change, while a quarter of the schools managed the minimal degree of change as indicated in the low stake scenario for description.

As far as the proximity of the work structure is concerned, 40% of the schools turned out to have chosen a relatively high degree of proximity, where as in 15% of the schools proximity between work structure and classroom practice was low. The correlation between stakes for innovation and the proximity of the work structure was significant and in the expected direction (r. 37, p. 05). Empirically however there is no perfect relationship between the two basic ingredients - " stakes" and "proximity" - of our innovation scenarios. A number of schools preferred a tight coupling in connection with a modest agenda, only a few the reverse ("cosmetic scenario"). But our general conclusion was that the majority of the schools with an ambitious innovation agenda also linked their work structure closely to the day-to-day educational activities.

SCENARIOS FOR CHANGE AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The scenario for description is a striking one in view of its minimal investment. From the viewpoint of the policymaker, it can be seen as an announcement of non-commitment. So the question arises why a substantial number of schools, within the general context of the aims and philisophy of the new basic school, mapped out such a poor innovation agenda.

We can briefly summarize the role of the contracting policy maker, in this case the central government. It did not issue specific directives with regard to the content of the innovation agenda nor the project design. In fact, its only expectation of the contracted schools was that they should take up "the spirit" of the policy program, which meant they did not need to spell out its "letter". Nonetheless, some schools failed to meet even this expectation. In our view this is a result of policy maker's lack of capacity for action; it gave itself a very limited role in the adoption process. By contracting with schools mainly in a written and administrative manner, it did not really try to bridge the gap between its policy aims and low profile agendas for change. This minimal strategy therefore forces us to look elsewhere for the factors that possibly have influenced scenario choices.

We first turn to the question of the possible influence of the local community on the scenario choices of principals and teachers. In particular, observations from the multi-case study provided us with the insights to analyze this question.

All three schools described are situated in the predominantly Catholic part of the country. In the Dutch setting this is an important fact because in the educational system there is a denominational segregation. Although all schools are funded one hundred percent by the central government, only about a quarter of the schools are supervised by local authorities. Forty percent of the schools are of a Roman-Catholic denomination and twentyfive percent, protestant.

In particular, school C (the scenario for description) reflects the character of its community. It is a traditional Catholic school in a traditional Catholic community. The school has no reputation for educational innovation and there is no pressure from the local community for such change. The school is strongly integrated in this community and has a garantueed inflow of new pupils every year. The principal expressed some aspiration for renewal. But a very modest agenda for change however was the only way to persuade his teachers into accepting contract status.

School B (the scenario for partial change) is a public non-denominational school also in a Catholic community. What 's more, for some time past there had existed quite a strong desire in the school to renew the classroom practice more radically, both as to content and to methods. In the principal's opinion, the reputation of the school in the Catholic community is rather vulnerable. The school is in a token position, so to speak. Developments in the school - for instance the abolition of the marking system - are watched very carefully from the community, particularly from nearby schools. In contrast to nearby schools of Catholic denomination, this school has to actively prove itself as a "good school". Any fall in the reputation of the school in the community immediately threatens the inflow of new pupils.

According to the principal, these particular circumstances have influenced decisions regarding stakes and design of the innovation project. Even the decision to try to obtain contract status was somewhat risky since this would suggest that the school was favourably disposed to educational renewal. In this respect it is also therefore easier to understand why the principal tried to involve in different ways people from outside - such as parents- directly in the innovation activities. He considered parents as "partners-in-innovation" and ironically this led to less commitment to the project.

Also school A (the scenario for transformation) is a public school in a Catholic neighbourhood. It differed from the other schools in that it had built up a reputation for admitting pupils who were having learning difficulties in other schools. But recently

even new pupils had to be refused admittance because of limited school capacity. This school was unique because it had formulated an explicit educational and pedagogical policy. Also striking was the completely different way this principal defined the boundary between the school and its immediate environment. He concentrated the renewal task completely within the teaching team and mobilized ad hoc specific expertise from the outside. Parents were seen as clients of the school and certainly not as partners-in-innovation. They were informed fully about the innovation activities but deliberately kept out of the work structure.

In summary, the market position of the school ('competition for pupils') seems to be an important factor in connection with scenario choice. It significantly determines the extent of innovation aims and philosophy. This was a particular problem in the case of schools B and C. Nevertheless both schools made different choices. The principal of school B looked at the community as a source of threat while his counterpart in school C saw it as a source of opportunities. This leads us to examine differences in the internal environment of the schools.

SCENARIOS FOR CHANGE AND SCHOOL CONTEXT

Principals dominated the process of formulating the innovation agenda and designing the temporary work structure. This derives from their formal position of power and their leadership visibility in relatively small organizations (8 to 15 teachers). Their aspirations determined to a high degree the innovation agenda.

In our study different leadership styles came to the fore. In particular we observed differences in the extent to which principals directed the renewal work and provided technical and social-emotional assistance to the teachers involved (Van der Vegt and Knip 1988). The principal of school A, with the scenario for transformation, provided a lot of substantive direction and placed strong pressure on his teachers. Social-emotional support was mainly reserved for teachers who endorsed his aspirations and claims. In

contrast, the principal of school B, who attempted to cope with a sceptical community, provided only a little substantive direction and exerted hardly any pressure on his teachers. Instead he strongly supported his team members, irrespective of their attitudes towards his renewal aspirations. In both situations there seems to be an good fit between the chosen scenario and the principal's leadership style.

Further analysis also made clear that different scenarios could also be understood from the innovation histories of the schools. Schools with scenarios for transformation - such as school A - had a history of high involvement in previous renewal activities (r. 50, p. 01). In connection with this point, the different hiring policies and the levels of professional training of the teaching staff deserve to be mentioned. In The Netherlands, as in many other countries, application procedures for teachers are regulated by standardized requirements in respect of vocational training. Other criteria can of course be utilized in the actual selection process. It became evident that in a number of schools several teachers had extra qualifications that were highly relevant for the implementation of the new basic school. In school A ("transformation"), this applied to half of the teachers, while in school B ("partial-change") only the principal had extra qualifications.

SCENARIOS FOR CHANGE: FROM ADAPTATION TO SELF-PRODUCTION

Implementing complex change requires strategic design. An implementation strategy implies the development of ad hoc social contexts for the realization of objectives. These contexts are necessarilly situated in the organizational life of the school (Van der Vegt and Knip 1988). To the extent that such a change is large scale and refers to a complex innovation concept - as the new basic school -in most cases the concept tends to be operationalized in very general and global aims. A large scale innovation project is characterized by its multidimensionality. At the level of the local scenario for change, the necessity for specific strategic decisions

at the school level becomes manifest. Firstly, decisions regarding the degree of coupling of the local innovation agenda to the central policy aims. Secondly, decisions concerning the degree of coupling between educational practices and the innovation agenda.

According to this line of thought we view the scenario for change largely as a response pattern, as an adaptation of the school to the intervention of the (external) policymaker. It brings out the way in which the school fights back in a situation in which it is externally controlled. In this context the temporary work structure can be seen as an important steering and coordination mechanism, as an instrument for coupling and de-coupling. For instance, as we have found in our research, it characterizes the innovation work either as a spearhead towards educational change or as a platform towards the local community. In the former case, the project arrangement is situated close to day-to-day classroom practices. It affords a favourable context for the execution of innovation work and for steering and supportive interventions of the principal.

From the response perspective, choices with regard to the local innovation agenda demand a broad analysis of situational or contingency factors (Mintzberg 1983). For instance, an important factor is the position of the school in the local community. As we have seen, there can be a dilemma over how much discrepancy is possible between the stakes of the project and the pattern of values and expectations in the local community. With increasing discrepancy more attention should be given to the acceptance of the innovation project in the community. A possible strategy is to involve representatives of the community - such as parents - in the project.

However, a change scenario is more than an expression of the adaptation of the school to an external policy and to the conditions in the local community. In our view the scenario is also to be conceived as an outcome of a process of self-reflection in the school by the policy intervention. Attention then shifts from the organization as an adapting system to the organization as a self-producing system (Morgan 1986). This perspective encourages us to

understand the transformation of organizations as the result of internally generated change. In our research each scenario appeared to be more comprehensible from the historical development of the school involved rather than from the policymaker's intentions. It confirms the assumption that if a school enters a process of policy linkage: "..it is really creating an opportunity to understand itself and its relation with the wider world " (Morgan 1986: 243). In fact, the scenario for change reflects also how the principal and teachers understand themselves and project themselves into the future, both relating to goals (= their agenda) and to structuring (= their work structure for innovation). Indeed this seems to be the most important effect of large scale innovation projects like the new basic school, more than following faithfully policymaker's intentions.

From this perspective of self-production, policy linkage is an active process, in which schools (re)produce and transform themselves as organizations. They do so in the act of positioning themselves with respect to external policy impulses. This conclusion puts a rather different interpretation upon the idea of policy implementation as primarily a process of top-down or outside-inside diffusion; that is, the diffusion of an innovation concept which has its own force and value. Latour (1986), talking about "the power of associations", contrasts this model of diffusion with a model of translation. According to this latter model, the spread in time and space of anything -claims, orders, or in our case policies- is in the hands of people. As Latour says, "..each of these people may act in many different ways,letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it" (Latour 1986: 267). In terms of this model, the transformation of the original token (command, message, etc.) is the natural state of affairs and not its maintenance as an unaltered term: "...each of the people of the chain is not simply resisting a force or transmitting it in the way they would in the diffusion model; rather, they are doing something essential for the existence and maintenance of the token" (Latour 1986: 268).

According to this argument, policy linkage is not primarily a

process of diffusion or adaptation but rather of translation in its original meaning. As far as an evaluation of scenarios for change is concerned, preconditions actually present in the school are the first point of reference and not external policy aims. To make this clear, we return briefly to our data analysis. From the perspective of diffusion and adaptation, schools with a scenario for transformation are good schools and schools with a scenario for partial change or even for description are bad ones. From the perspective of translation and self-production, there are no good nor bad schools. Looking back the only thing one can say is that schools with a scenario for transformation were closer to the original aims of the policy maker even before the program started.

IN CONCLUSION: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND SCHOOL MANAGERS

Frequently, aspirations of policymakers are inversely proportional to their ability to control the actual events they wish to change. It may happen that the innovation programs they establish are only ritual events since people involved in implementing organizational change 'ride' the initial disturbances before returning to a settled routine. As a reaction to failure to stimulate local change, policy makers will then choose either of two courses. The first is ritual announcements of policy with no serious mechanisms to modify local practice. The second is the reliance on official regulation to mandate change. On the next occasion the frustrated policymaker will tend to increase control and surveillance.

Basically, the possibilities of influencing core organizational processes from an external position seem rather restricted. Even so, we do not regard our analysis "from adaptation to self-production" as a plea to policymakers to refrain from engaging in school innovation programs. Our research suggests that, in the process of policy linkage, the policymaker must be continually sensitive to the effects of its own actions on the program. For instance, if he strives to 'tight couple' school's innovation agendas with an ambitious innovation concept, he has to join

energetically in the process of translation. This is clearly a major challenge. Inevitably it leads to a limiting of the number of schools included in the policy program, because it is a strategy more suitable for an experimental, voluntary and probably small-scale project. On the other hand, if the innovation policy is large-scale and mandated, the policy maker has to put up with a disparate range of change scenarios. These sort of circumstances make it more difficult to assess the level of implementation in a uniform way (Vandenberghe 1988).

In the process of policy linkage principals naturally assume a key role. Pre-eminently, they operate at the intersection of adaptation and self-production. They interact both with policy makers and teachers. In both types of interaction they take a different position (Klabbers 1986). In interaction with policy makers they are required to assume an external or referential position towards the school, which by calling on their sense of social responsibility, leads them to enhance the stakes of the change program. In interaction with teachers, principals take an internal or self-referential position towards the policymaker so that in the same process of policy linkage there is an appeal to their sense of identity and self-image, when they are invited to preserve the integrity of the system of which they are a part.

Principals are thus 'men-in-the-middle' who have to make strategic choices in the space between the overall policy aims and the self-image of their schools. Our research makes clear the difficulties and pressures engendered by the need to find a balance between both these positions.

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